

*SCIENCE AND FREEDOM*

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# HUNGARY

OCTOBER, 1956

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*A BULLETIN OF THE COMMITTEE ON  
SCIENCE AND FREEDOM.*

No. 8

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## THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND FREEDOM . . .

. . . was established in July, 1954, under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a permanent organization with headquarters in Paris, to carry on the discussion of issues in the field of academic freedom which was begun at the Hamburg Congress of July, 1953. The Committee will seek to maintain contact with all who are interested in these issues and to prepare the way for a further Congress on Science and Freedom.

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Hungary  
October 1956

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## A MESSAGE FROM PAUL IGNOTUS

*Paul Ignotus is a Hungarian writer who was a leading left-wing opponent of the Horthy régime in the 1930's. In 1939 he left Hungary, where his career as a journalist had been barred by the authorities, and emigrated to Britain. From 1947 onwards he worked for the Hungarian Legation in London, hoping to contribute towards an understanding between the Communist régime and the Western countries. When he returned to Hungary in 1950, however, he was arrested by the Stalinist government, tortured and condemned to fifteen years hard labour as a British "spy." In March 1956, during the period of "liberalization" that followed Krushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress of the U.S.S.R., he was released and allowed to resume his journalistic activities. Elected a member of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian Writers' Union, he played a prominent part in the affairs of this organization, which supplied the intellectual leadership for the Revolution of October, 1956. After the Russian invasion of November 4th he remained in Hungary to try to assist in bringing about a compromise solution, but when the kidnapping of Imre Nagy by the Russians on November 22nd marked the beginning of a full-blooded totalitarian régime, he left his country and is now living in Britain.*

The Hungarian revolution was no less surprising to us Hungarians than it was for others. Our country's record over the last few decades had not been very encouraging. In spite of outstanding achievements in the intellectual and moral spheres, our recent political history was on the whole more conspicuous for subservience to totalitarian dictatorships and inability to resist the epidemics of modern and reactionary obscurantism than for any sustained adherence to the liberal traditions of 1848. There was, in particular, one factor in our national life that represented a dangerous unknown quantity, even for those of us who claimed to be its objective students. That was the youth, educated, indoctrinated and regimented under Communism, and taught to believe in Russian superiority, on the Stalinist pattern. We feared that these young people would never rise against our foreign oppressors. We feared even more that if ever they did rebel, they might follow the paths of their elders in clamouring for the return of a near-Hitlerite or at least a near-Horthyite system.

These fears proved to be unfounded. Our youth fought the foreign invaders and their Quislings with admirable courage and determination. Russification and indoctrination only induced them to react all the more violently against everything connected with Stalin's rule.

Nevertheless, far from showing any sympathy for those Fascist or retrograde tendencies which had been inspired by a wish to counteract Bolshevism, they emerged from the years of Bolshevik rule completely free from conventional 'anti-Bolshevik' prejudice; free, in fact, of the superstitions characteristic of our former squirearchy and even more of our would-be squirearchy, the Hitlerite lower middle-classes. They showed a free and receptive spirit, not clearly crystallised as yet, but all the more willing to study sympathetically any thought and idea coming from the West.

A very curious feature of our revolution, and especially of the efforts of our youth, was the decisive role which writers and scholars were able to play in them. There was, and is, a passionate interest in highbrow writers and poets and their works amongst the Hungarian masses. One of the main reasons for this is the sensibility shown by Hungarian men of letters—and, I should add, particularly by some who were members of the Communist Party—for the problems, sufferings and wishes of the common people.

This involvement with the issues of their time, has earned for the Hungarian writers a special place among those who are now being persecuted by the Soviet invaders and their agents. The Writers' Association and the Union of Journalists in Hungary have been placed under Government tutelage, and dissolved as independent entities. It is hard to tell, at the moment, what has become of the individual members of these associations. Some leading writers, such as Dery, Hay, Benjamin, and Lajos Tamasi, were apparently arrested but released after some days' time: while some of the younger and less well-known writers and journalists, such as Gali and Obersovszky whose arrest was announced officially, are still in prison. A number of prominent persons in this field have disappeared (probably to Rumania) among them Professor Lukacs, the former Minister of Education in the Imre Nagy Government and the journalists Geza Lozonozy and Sandor Haraszti. As dissenting Communists these men of letters are in the most hated category of the enemies of the regime, for the successors of Stalin are in no way second to him in their zeal for heresy hunting. But broadly the same fate threatens all who raise their voices against the Russian oppressors.

Writers and scholars abroad should use every opportunity to show their solidarity with their colleagues in Hungary. In the atmosphere of heightened awareness of the role of intellectuals in public affairs, which has emerged from the recent events, they can be sure that their words will impress the Hungarian people. We are grateful to those who have done so. The Committee on Science and Freedom have already played a notable part in drawing attention to this and similar issues. I am sure they are willing and able to do even more.

PAUL IGNOTUS.

London, February, 1957.

## OSCAR JASZI AND HUNGARIAN LIBERALISM

by

MICHAEL POLANYI

Oscar Jászi, whose death on February 13th, at the age of 81 was widely reported in the American press, was the most distinguished representative of Hungarian liberal thought of this century. In 1900 he founded in Budapest a *Society for Social Science* and its journal, *The Twentieth Century*, which jointly opened up the first barrage of resolute social criticism in Hungary. In heavy fighting against the combined pressures of an overbearing aristocracy, a narrow-minded clergy, a small nobility entrenched in government offices and a blindly complacent new business class, this movement established during the first two decades of this century a first foothold for democratic ideals in Hungary.

This was a period of rapid transformation. The growth of Socialist trade-unions; innovations in poetry and painting; the rise of great musical composers—all combined in shaping the new outlook. Jászi remained at the centre of these varied aspirations. In 1918 he joined Count Károlyi in forming a revolutionary government, with the aim of carrying out a federalist re-organisation of the multi-racial Hungarian state. In this he failed, and leaving his country he spent the rest of his life in exile as professor of Social Science in the University of Oberlin, Ohio, where he continued to publish numerous books on public affairs.

For 30 years Jászi was abused by the mouthpieces of the Horthy régime and coolly ignored by the Soviet sympathising intelligentsia who opposed Horthy. Uncompromising, he stood alone. But more recently, the ideas for which Jászi had fought, have been rapidly gaining ascendancy. And almost over-night, he was acknowledged once more as the true teacher of modern Hungary. On his 80th birthday, Hungarian writers the world over paid tribute to his unique merits.

The revolution of October 23rd, 1956, was in fact nurtured altogether on the intellectual soil of the opening decades of this century. Thus it has established Oscar Jászi's historic role as a spiritual leader of the future Hungary.

## EDITORIAL

On November 3rd, 1956, we received a telegram from a Hungarian University, which contained the most challenging and also the most moving appeal for action that has so far been addressed to us. The text of the telegram was as follows :

*'The reborn democratic Hungary, having regained its national independence, wishes to live in peace and friendship with our immediate neighbours and with all nations of the world. We address our appeal to all the universities of the world to rally to our side with their moral authority. In our endeavour to see the early restoration of our country's independence, which is the condition of peace and thereby the foundation of scientific and scholarly pursuits, we make a special appeal to those scholars with whom we had personal contact, whether abroad or at home, to come to our aid. As we have, to the extent of our modest powers, endeavoured in the past to serve mankind with our researches, so we wish to do everything in our power in future to collaborate with our colleagues, both in neighbouring countries and throughout the world. We would be happy if this our aim could be realised.'*

The message bore the signatures of a group of professors and concluded with a sentence in English : 'Please forward immediately to all important universities in the world.'

The telegram arrived in Manchester at 7-30 in the evening. At dawn on the following day, Sunday, November 4th, Russian troops advanced on Budapest and began the massacre of the revolutionaries. All over Hungary the freedom fighters began the last desperate struggle against overwhelming odds which ended ten days later in the complete extinction of the armed revolution. The Nagy government, the Writers' Union and the local Freedom stations uttered their last desperate appeal to the United Nations, to the intellectuals, the scientists, the writers and the leaders of opinion in the Western world, and to anyone who might pick up their cry of agony—and then disappeared.



What should one do ? Take the line suggested to us later by a few of our correspondents ; that protests are, in any case, useless, that the Russians respect nothing except force and that we would probably only harm the Hungarian professors by taking action on their behalf ? Do nothing, in fact, and just sit back and watch the Soviet armies settle accounts with their victims ?

That was one possibility. The other was to try, as far as lay in our power, to secure for the Hungarian scholars that moral support of the universities of the world for which they had appealed. We chose the latter course.

On Sunday, November 4th, we despatched the following telegram to the Soviet Ambassador in London, Mr. J. A. Malik :

*'On behalf of International Committee Science and Freedom representing scholars throughout the world wish to express our grave concern at fate of our colleagues in Hungarian Universities and appeal to Russian authorities to respect the freedom and cultural heritage of Hungary.'*

The text of the telegram with the signatures of the Committee's chairman, members and honorary sponsors, was released to the press and was reported in the *Manchester Guardian* and a number of other papers. We tried to report our action to Hungary by telegram but after a few hours' delay we were told that communications had broken down.

What next ? Should we now proceed to make a formal approach to the universities throughout the world ? And if so, how does one address a university ? As a corporate body it is inclined to be rather inarticulate.

In view of these difficulties and also because of the disastrous news from Hungary, we hesitated before taking our next step. But the Executive Secretary of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, our parent organisation, was in no doubt what to do. 'Write to everyone on your mailing list,' he advised, 'and ask them to send in their names for a declaration of solidarity with the Hungarian universities.'

We did so. And if anything could be more moving than the whole desperate plight of the Hungarian people and their pathetic appeal to the universities of the world, it was the response which we now received.

Between November 6th, when we sent out the circular letter and December 4th when we presented our Statement on Hungary to the Soviet Ambassador in London, we received about 1,200 names of persons wishing to subscribe to the statement on Hungary or to collective declarations sent in support of our action. About 300 further names reached us after the presentation. At the time of compiling the statement and signatures for presentation to the Embassy, 108 universities in 23 countries were represented among the signatories. After that we lost count.

But this was not really a matter of numbers—after all there are probably more than one million members of university staffs throughout the world and most of them must have sympathised with Hungary. What was remarkable was the quality of the response: the evident strength of feeling which overcame all other considerations. Confronted with an appeal from a body which the recipients knew, for the most part, only through its bulletin or through the recommendation of a colleague, they cast aside immediately all the normal reserve of academics towards printed appeals and sent in their signatures, and in some cases quite lengthy expressions of support, for a statement that they had not even seen. This latter circumstance was, of course, due to the fact that events were moving so fast in Hungary that it was impossible to decide in advance what kind of approach—and to whom—would in the end prove practicable.

The response literally spanned the globe. From Japan, the Philippines, India, Australia, South America, U.S.A., and most countries in Europe the letters, telegrams and postcards came pouring in. Some had referred the matter to the governing body of their University. Others had posted the message from Hungary on the notice-board and asked for signatures, or else drafted a circular letter of their own appealing for support from their colleagues. We were told that our appeal had been reproduced in technical and professional journals, discussed at a conference of Rectors of West German Universities, released to the press in Italy and Australia, and forwarded to the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

Of course, there were exceptions to the general approval and endorsement of our action. A small number of our correspondents expressed the view that the Soviet authorities would take no notice of our proposed Statement and that it might endanger the Hungarian professors. These misgivings were, of course, quite understandable and had been present in our minds at the outset of our action, but we had come to the conclusion—supported by the vast majority of those whom we approached—that if we yielded to these two arguments (which are always applicable to the situation where world opinion watches from outside the extinction of freedom in totalitarian countries) then we would be sanctioning a world-wide conspiracy of silence in the face of any and every deed that the dictators might care to commit.

From the East European countries we had indications that in Poland, at any rate, there was profound sympathy with Hungary, and sufficient freedom for such sympathy to be expressed in private—although of course it was not possible for Polish intellectuals to take part in a manifestation of solidarity which had originated in the West.

From Yugoslavia there was no response. One voice which had been raised in sympathy with the Hungarians—that of Tito's former colleague in the government, Djilas—had been silenced by imprisonment, and it was clearly not safe to follow his example. The dilemma here was

very evident. Djilas had expressed the view that the spontaneous uprising of workers and students against the Soviet regime in Hungary meant the beginning of the end of Communism as a political philosophy. The same idea must have occurred to many intellectuals in Yugoslavia and other East European countries and such thoughts are clearly dangerous: they would mean the end of Tito, as well as of his more orthodox colleagues in the satellite countries.

From East Germany we received a long diatribe informing us that the professors of the Humboldt University of Berlin had deliberated as to what action they should take to help their colleagues in Hungary, but had decided not to give their support to our declaration because they considered that the appeal was suspect in its political implications. The telegram from Hungary had referred to the 'reborn' democracy in that country, and this (according to our correspondent) cast a doubt on the political integrity of the signatories because the pre-war Horthy regime in Hungary had been a Fascist dictatorship.

This response from East Berlin is a notable example of the extent to which trained minds have been befogged in that part of the world, even though consciences have not, apparently, been quite extinguished. The essence of 'democracy' for which the Hungarian people were fighting and which they felt had been 'reborn' in that brief space of twelve days between the morning of October 23rd and the dawn of November 4th, is the possession of basic civic rights; of freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of the press and freedom for opposition parties to speak their minds and exert some influence on the conduct of affairs. And democracy in this sense had existed for many years in Hungary before 1939, both under the rule of the Hapsburgs in the 18th and 19th centuries and (in an attenuated form) under the Horthy regime, between the wars, which was a monarchist regime without a monarch, of the type which also existed in Austria, and not a totalitarian dictatorship in the modern sense.

All this is of course well known—presumably even to the professors of East Berlin. But they are able to play on a confusion of mind—which may perhaps persist for some time until the new phenomenon of revolutions in favour of democracy, directed against 'Popular' Democracies, becomes more familiar—between democracy in the sense of universal suffrage and an egalitarian society, and democracy as a system of civic freedoms. The Hungarian revolutionaries made no demands for universal suffrage or social equity. They had no need to ask for these benefits because both were already embodied in the prevailing regime—together with a complete denial of all that is meant in the West by 'democracy.'

But the quibblings from East Berlin university concerning the true meaning of 'democracy' and the party loyalty of the signatories of the telegram were perhaps to be expected. More surprising and also

more depressing was the shattering silence of Communist intellectuals in Western countries. Admittedly, there were some brave voices which denounced Soviet action in Hungary, notably that of Sartre in France. But at a moment such as this when Communists in Hungary were openly defying the might of the Soviet Union and denouncing the false gods that had brought them to this pass, one might have expected a large scale demonstration of opinion by all those scientists, scholars, writers, artists and intellectuals generally, who had at any time allowed themselves to become associated in the public mind with support for Communism or 'fellow travelling' ideas.

In the forefront of this movement one might have expected to find such names as J. D. Bernal and J. B. S. Haldane. One would have thought that the desperate cry for help from Hungary, addressed to the intellectuals of the world, would have touched them above all ; as partners in the delusion that brought so much suffering to Hungarians.

Instead, there was silence : all-embracing and disgraceful silence. The rank and file of British Trade Unionists turned against the Communists in leading positions in their Unions. The foreign correspondent of the leading British Communist newspaper 'The Daily Worker,' resigned in protest against the policy of his paper. But the intellectuals who had led the way to Communism, and to the crisis in which these people now found themselves, remained silent. The World Federation of Scientists, whose conferences and manifestations had played a major part in bringing scientists into the 'fellow-travelling' fold, did not see fit to make its voice heard on this occasion. The only practical enlightenment forthcoming from Communist circles in Britain was a statement by Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury, who explained that although in a moral sense the Soviet action in Hungary could not be approved, it could not be condemned outright, in a political sense, because the Soviet armed forces had been invited into Hungary by the Hungarian government and because they were fighting for progress, against reactionary Fascism.

A similar equivocal judgement has characterised the attitude to Hungary of a much more eminent figure : Mr. Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. In the post-war years Mr. Nehru had gained a world-wide reputation as a champion of moral standards in international affairs, and it was to him that the Hungarians appealed as the 'only apostle of peace in the modern world' to intercede with the Russians on their behalf. But neither this appeal nor the many other messages sent to him by international organisations—including the Congress for Cultural Freedom—had the slightest effect in moving him to compassion with the Hungarian people.

In the United Nations, India was the only non-Communist country to vote against the resolution of November 9th condemning Russian aggression in Hungary and calling on the Soviet troops to withdraw.

Mr. Nehru himself, while condemning the Russian action, has so effectively qualified this condemnation with obscure references to 'non-interference' (apparently directed against the supporters of Hungarian freedom at least as much as against the Soviets) and with his apparent belief in the Soviet myth that Russian troops were 'invited' into Hungary, that the ideal picture of him as the disinterested saviour of mankind has utterly collapsed. Perhaps it was too much to expect anyone to carry such a role for long.

It should be recorded, however, that Mr. Nehru's attitude in this matter is by no means universally shared among Indian intellectuals and our statement on Hungary received considerable support from Indian university professors. Moreover, an Indian Committee for Solidarity with Hungary has been formed under the chairmanship of Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan, who is an Honorary President of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. This Committee has been extremely active in seeking to gain a hearing for the true facts concerning the events in Hungary, which have been obscured by official statements in India. Not the least among its tasks has been that of persuading prominent Indians to risk the loss of business or political standing entailed in forthright criticism of Mr. Nehru's policy. It seems that the Indian intellectuals' efforts in favour of Hungary may lead to a strengthening of democratic freedom in their own country.

Finally, what of the Soviet response to our statement? How do they view the appeal for free intellectual contacts with scholars in Hungary and an ending of restrictions on intellectual freedom?

On December 4th, 1956, a small group of University scholars who had agreed to act as spokesmen for the signatories of our Statement went to see the Soviet Ambassador in London. The members of the Group were Professor Cyril Darlington of Oxford (member of the Committee on Science and Freedom and leader of the delegation); Sir David Lindsay Keir, Master of Balliol College, Oxford; Professor E. G. Pulleyblank of Downing College, Cambridge; Dame Kathleen Lonsdale of London University; and Professor H. J. Fleure, Emeritus Professor of Manchester University. To all of them we extend our thanks and appreciation of their readiness to give up their time and energy to this somewhat unrewarding and uncomfortable assignment.

Our object was, of course, not to convert the Soviet authorities to liberalism in one afternoon but to add our part to the general harassment by world opinion which they were having to face at that time—and are still facing—in consequence of their actions in Hungary. The cumulative effect of such a multiplicity of minor irritations can be quite serious, particularly since the leaders of the U.S.S.R. are anxious to maintain the valuable contacts in the intellectual and other spheres which they have only recently established with Western countries. If anyone doubts this, let him contemplate for a moment just how much easier life could be for the Russians if all the universities of the world—

and indeed all other bodies which help to influence public thinking—were enthusiastically in favour of the Soviets' recent actions and anxious to convert their fellow-countrymen to the same opinion.

The fact that our movement—as evidenced by the Statement on Hungary with its wide range of signatories and by the membership of the delegation—was taken seriously by the Russians, was clear as soon as we arrived at the Embassy. We were courteously received by Mr. Rofchin, Minister-Counsellor to the Embassy who invited us into a large reception room where we were seated in armchairs and informed that he was at our disposal for as long as we wished and would answer any question and give any information that we might require.

Professor Darlington thanked him for this offer and explained that we had come to present a statement on Hungary, with the text of which the Ambassador was already acquainted, as we had sent a copy in advance, and we would welcome an expression of his view on its contents. Whereupon he offered the document with its signatures to Mr. Rofchin. But here we encountered a point of etiquette. Mr. Rofchin stated that he was authorised to listen to the statement but not to receive it. He declined, therefore, to hold it in his hand and actually shrank away slightly in apprehension of this dangerous piece of paper when Professor Darlington persisted in offering it to him. Apparently the Ambassador had not wished to place his government in the awkward predicament of providing a formal answer to our proposals, but at the same time, he wished to give the impression that a full and frank reply would be given on an informal basis.

Professor Darlington read out the statement slowly, point by point, underlining particularly the final section where a request is made for immediate action by the Soviet authorities :

*The undersigned who are members, sponsors, or supporters of the international Committee on Science and Freedom, wish to address to the governments of the U.S.S.R. and Hungary, the following declaration :*

*'We have heard the repeated calls for help from Hungarian intellectuals, scholars, scientists and writers, addressed to their colleagues throughout the world.*

*We express to you our deep concern at the fate of our colleagues in Hungary and appeal to you to restore to them the rights of intellectual freedom and free cultural contacts with scholars in other countries.*

*We ask you to give your answer in the most practical manner : namely by permitting at once a free exchange of visits between scholars outside Hungary and those in the Hungarian Universities and by ending immediately all restrictions on intellectual freedom.'*

Mr. Rofchin then began his statement in reply. He wished, he said, to refer to the background of the Hungarian events. He proceeded to launch upon a discourse outlining the events of October 23rd in Hungary

when the first uprising began, which, he said, was to a large extent justified by the 'errors' of the Stalinist regime in Hungary, and how this had been followed by an infiltration of 'reactionary' elements among the genuine revolutionaries, and ultimately a murderous persecution of genuine 'patriots' (i.e., members of the Secret police and others associated with the regime) all over Hungary. In the face of this situation, the Kadar government found itself compelled to appeal for Russian help and the Soviet government agreed, though with some reluctance, as it appreciated the 'difficulties' that were inevitable when troops were used in a foreign country. The Soviet authorities felt quite sure that everyone with a true understanding of the situation would realise that any other democratic country faced with the same situation would have to come to the aid of its neighbour and ally, faced with the destruction of the democratic regime by reactionary forces. As soon as order had been restored, Soviet troops would withdraw from Budapest and negotiations would begin with the Hungarian government for the establishment of relations on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of both parties and non-interference with each others' internal affairs, in accordance with the Soviet Government's declaration on relations with other Socialist countries, issued on October 30th, 1956.

All this, though admittedly propaganda, repeated from an official statement by Mr. Malik which had been sent to us before the meeting and which Mr. Rofchin had apparently learnt by heart, certainly did not argue any lack of interest in the good opinion of the outside world.

Professor Darlington did not wait to the end of the recital but interrupted Mr. Rofchin with the comment that we were familiar with the ambassador's official statement and did not require a repetition of it on this occasion. What we wanted was a straightforward answer to our request for unrestricted contacts with Hungarian university scholars, including freedom for them to visit Western countries, and an assurance that suppression of intellectual freedom in Hungary would cease.

To this, of course, we received no reply that could be considered satisfactory. Mr. Rofchin claimed that it was only common sense that one must first restore order before intellectual contacts could be resumed. But he failed to explain how a visit from a group of scholars such as the one he was then addressing could cause disorder in Hungary, nor did he succeed in allaying our fears, expressed by Dame Kathleen Lonsdale, that by the time 'order' had been restored, the intellectual freedom which we were trying to foster would in fact have been extinguished.

He was told, with particular emphasis by Sir David Lindsay Keir, that the stock of goodwill which had only recently been built up by renewed contacts between scholars at Oxford and elsewhere in the West, and their colleagues in the Soviet Union, had been dispersed overnight with the news of Soviet brutalities in Hungary and the forcible suppression

of the movement for freedom in that country. Sir David said that the reputation of the U.S.S.R. in the universities of which he had knowledge now stood lower than at any time since the 1920's. At this onslaught Mr. Rofchin decided to plead lack of understanding of English and asked for a pause while Sir David's remarks were translated by an interpreter. One doubted, however, whether the official in question would have the courage to render correctly what had been said.

In the end, all that Mr. Rofchin could find to say was that the Soviet Union had in recent years done its utmost to foster cultural contacts, but the British, through the official agency which controlled the ballet in their country, had prevented the Covent Garden Company from travelling to Russia. Whereupon Professor Darlington asked whether the shooting down of helpless civilians on the Hungarian frontier, merely because they wished to leave their country, was really the best way to foster cultural contacts. 'No' he was told, this was done in the interests of 'security.' How one can threaten security and good order by leaving one's country was not explained.

Dame Kathleen pleaded with Mr. Rofchin to appreciate that our motives were entirely sincere, that the Committee on Science and Freedom had itself taken action against resurgent Fascism (in the case of Göttingen University in May, 1955) and that the Soviet Union should at least agree to the admission of United Nations observers, who could satisfy themselves that stories of oppression and brutality in Hungary were untrue. If there was nothing to conceal, nothing could be lost by admitting observers. This question, said Mr. Rofchin, would, of course, have to be decided by the Hungarian government, but in principle he could say that the idea of admitting foreign observers to report on the policies of another country was a clear affront to the sovereignty of that country: and sovereignty, it appeared, was a principle of paramount importance in the Soviet view, which must be respected. Interference of this kind, in the internal affairs of another country, could not be tolerated.

Quietly and politely Professor Darlington asked a question: Was the presence of ten Soviet divisions in Hungary perhaps also an interference in Hungary's internal affairs? 'You have the American forces in Britain!' answered Mr. Rofchin, perhaps rather indiscreetly, since it is an article of faith with the Soviets that the presence of American forces in Britain *is* an interference with Britain's internal affairs.

In the end, as we pressed the question when we could expect some positive action on the removal of the restrictions on intellectual freedom and contact with the outside world, which were supposedly required for the preservation of 'order' in Hungary, Mr. Rofchin reverted to a point which he had made earlier: namely that the Soviet Union had no power to decide such matters and that this was entirely a question for the Hungarian government. In view of the fact that he had spent over



an hour discussing this very problem, this pronouncement must be regarded as a prize example of 'double-thinking' which we did not trouble to attempt to disentangle.

Professor Darlington concluded by stating that we were not at all satisfied with the statements and explanations that had been offered. Whereupon Mr. Rofchin, amiably smiling, escorted us to the door and a number of functionaries appeared to help us on with our coats.

The whole episode had that air of unreality and utter duplicity which one associates with contacts with emissaries of totalitarian countries when they are outside the realms of their own authority. It was clear that if we had been citizens of Hungary or the Soviet Union, addressing Mr. Rofchin on his own territory, any one of the comments offered by our group would have been sufficient to bring about the liquidation of all of us—in the interests of 'order' and 'sovereignty.' One cannot recall that Karl Marx ever showed any fondness for either of these two slogans which appear at the moment to be guiding lights of the Marxist Workers' Paradise.

To complete this tour of '1984' within the peaceful and unsuspecting surroundings of the city of London some of the members of the delegation visited the Hungarian legation. At this point, however, where we had been led to expect the last word on the matter from the 'sovereign' government solely responsible, we were greeted with a state of fear and helplessness which had to be seen to be believed.

Outside the door of the legation stood a policeman, and inside were a group of frightened people who hardly dared to open the door to us, presumably in case we might throw a bomb in the course of the conversation.

For a long time we were kept parleying on the doorstep while successive emissaries appeared to examine our credentials and to dispute with us the facts concerning the letter we had sent to announce our arrival, and then withdrew for further instructions from higher authority. Finally we expressed very forcibly our disgust at the lack of manners of the Hungarian nation, under its new régime, which kept its visitors standing on the doorstep and, as a result, we were grudgingly admitted to the sitting room.

'And what' said the young man who had been left to deal with us, after we had sat down and handed him a copy of our Statement, 'shall I do now?' He was quite helpless in the face of this threatening situation. 'Call the Minister' he was told. 'But the Minister is not here.' 'Then call the housekeeper: call somebody . . .'

Nothing happened. No one came. Apparently the Minister was sitting upstairs and lacked the courage to face this 'demonstration.' After a while a further emissary arrived from upstairs to inspect us. Then the telephone rang and there was a conversation in Hungarian from which one gathered that the Minister was indeed upstairs, that our Hungarian friend (as he had now become, because he looked so

pathetically terrified and bewildered) was trying to explain that we had written to say that we would be here at this time and that we insisted that we should either have had a letter saying that the Minister could not see us, or else (since no letter had been written) an interview now with the Minister or his representative. But it was no use—the voice from upstairs shouted him down relentlessly. We took pity on him and withdrew, after instructing him to tell the Minister that if he wanted a lesson on how to receive delegations he should call on Mr. Malik.

It was a pathetic exhibition of stupidity and sheer fright: a demonstration (no doubt after telephone contact with the Soviet Embassy) of the complete powerlessness of the present rulers of Hungary in any matter where the Soviet Union has a direct interest. It is true that we were told that we could come back on the next day and have an interview with the Minister: but by then, of course, he would have had his detailed instructions from the Big Brother at the Soviet Embassy and we would have heard a further gramophone recital of the official party line. What we could not have, either then or at any time, was an independent expression of views by the Hungarian Minister on the plight of his native country, of which he was supposed to represent the 'sovereign' authority. Our statement, however, with its supporting declarations and 1,200 signatures was left in the hands of the Hungarian official.

# FROM STALIN TO KRUSHCHEV

THE BACKGROUND OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

by

G. H. GRETTON

*Mr. Gretton is head of the East European Service of the B.B.C. His account of the broad trends of Soviet policy that preceded the Hungarian Revolution is based on information from Soviet radio and newspaper sources and from personal contacts in the Soviet Union.*

## *Stalin's European Empire.*

At some moment, probably in 1945, Stalin made a critical decision. From all we now know, it was quite certainly his own personal decision and it set the pattern of the relations between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world. At the end of the war, contact had been renewed between Russia and the world on a greater scale than ever in history. Millions of Soviet citizens had been outside the Soviet Union and millions would be staying for an indefinite period even outside the new, expanded frontiers won first by collaboration with Hitler's Germany and then its defeat. The manner of this defeat was wholly favourable to the Soviet Union, for Soviet ground troops had engaged the largest number of German troops and had defeated them. The indecision of the Western Allies in 1944, and the lack of American support for British policy, had secured for the Soviet Union an overwhelming position in Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe: Soviet troops stood only 20 miles from Hamburg, and Churchill was hard put to it—against strong American opposition—to save Greece from falling to the Soviet sphere.

At the same time, the victory of the Red Army had given the Soviet Union unparalleled prestige and goodwill in the Western world. All those prophets and critics who had expected the Soviet system to crack under the Nazi war machine seemed to have been confounded. Stalin had to decide whether he would exploit his position by co-operation with the West, or turn back to the traditional Russian policy of isolation, suspicion and autocracy.

Perhaps there could only have been one decision, given Stalin's nature and his knowledge of how precarious his survival had been under the first impact of Hitler's armies. There were two major dangers:

millions of Soviet citizens were stationed in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, learning by observation that the material superiority of the Soviet way of life was a myth. Secondly, the Soviet intelligentsia would take every opportunity of satisfying its consuming curiosity about Western science, thought, culture and techniques. So Stalin chose the path of isolationism ; the Iron Curtain which in 1939 had secured the frontiers of the Soviet Union was moved several hundred miles westward and the control of thought in the Soviet Union itself was intensified. Hence Zhdanov, Lysenko, and all the rest. And what Stalin did in the Soviet Union, his satraps imitated in the satellite countries. This process of thought control can never be static : the strait waistcoat has to be constantly tightened. Moreover, Stalin began, undoubtedly, to go mad in his last years : the anti-Jewish drive after 1948, culminating in the lunatic fabrication of the ' Doctors' Plot ' in 1953, probably marks the turning point.

### *The Post-Stalin era.*

The relief felt by the Soviet political leaders and intelligentsia after Stalin's death was accompanied by a good deal of alarm. The announcement of the death contained a warning against ' panic and disarray ' and this became understandable when later the story of the remarkable events of the lying-in-state came out. Two or three divisions of motorised troops were brought into Moscow to cordon off the entire centre of the city. Outside the cordon vast crowds of people milled around and almost anything might have happened. In fact the crowds remained good-humoured, and most of the disturbances consisted of brawls between the military and the security police. The latter were a further source of ' panic ' to the majority of the inner leadership, for there is no doubt that Beria set to work at once to win supreme authority through the secret police.

But relief eventually prevailed (after Beria's demise) and with it a ' gentlemen's ' agreement among the members of the Presidium that, whatever happened, leadership would remain collective enough to ensure that none of them should take the walk down a prison corridor because of policy changes. Otherwise, neither Malenkov nor Krushchev would be at liberty to-day. A real effort was also made to liberalise the régime, and the scope of this effort should not be underrated. Legal processes were overhauled. No one will ever know how many political prisoners were released—there were no personnel records, in any case—but the number must be immense. The system of forced labour has been very largely scrapped : partly because it had been found an inefficient way of utilising manpower and partly from a genuine desire to create a civilised legal code and administer it properly. The power of the secret police was heavily cut : again, partly from fear of what it had become and partly from a genuine desire to restore or create

civic confidence. The police in Russia have always been hated and despised. The opportunity to hate and despise them without fear was very popular, especially among the classes who now form a public opinion.

The end-product may not correspond to democracy and the rule of law as understood in Western countries, but its impact in the Soviet Union was very great. The intelligentsia was profoundly encouraged. There has grown up in Russia a very influential class which, for practical purposes, runs the country. They are the managers of factories, research workers and other scientists, technical experts, doctors, lawyers, administrators. There has in fact been a managerial revolution and the managerial class is well-defined and indispensable. There are good and bad managers, but there is a keen and enthusiastic hard-core ; ambitious, energetic, consumed with intellectual curiosity ; starved of contact with the outside world, yet feeling instinctive solidarity with their opposite numbers abroad and desperately curious to study their methods.

#### *The Policy of Co-existence.*

Side by side with this loosening at home, the new Soviet leaders radically changed their foreign policy. They were afraid of atomic war, and believed that Stalin had led them out on to a limb through his policy of hostile isolation. Because he had feared to lay his régime open to comparison with the West on equal terms, he had united the West against him. He had conjured up the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Balkan Pact, and there was also the shadow of a new German army, which they feared more than Anglo-American military potential, because of their experience in the war. The collective leadership sought a way out of this cul-de-sac. Without changing the final objective of Soviet foreign policy—which remains Communist domination of the world under Russian control—they radically changed the methods. The co-existence campaign was a very skilful one and it was very successful up to a point. The old errors were admitted and blamed on Stalin. No major sacrifice of Soviet interests was made, but there were a number of compromises and concessions to common sense which Stalin would not have permitted. The Korean war was brought to an end, the Austrian treaty was signed, amends were made to Tito, and so on. The whole tone was changed in such a way as to suggest that the Soviet Union was being sweetly reasonable and that anyone who questioned any point of Soviet policy was ungracious and unreasonable. Delegations began to pass to and fro at an accelerated speed.

The wider aim of the policy of co-existence was one of 'peaceful penetration' by the Soviet Union. War would be renounced and competition would be by economic and political propaganda. Communist areas would remain controlled, but there would be enough

traffic into them to underline the reasonableness of the new Soviet policy. At the same time non-communist areas would be open as never before to communist penetration, and the 'uncommitted' areas would be wide open to communist influence. No one, for example, would observe Russian colonialism in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan or Sakhalin ; but every trick of propaganda and every appeal to racial prejudice would rouse Asians, Africans and Arabs against the Western colonial powers. Similarly there would be communist parties in the West but no non-communist parties in Russia. If the Western powers understood the real danger implicit in this policy of co-existence, they took no concerted steps to combat it.

*Freedom : The Fifth Column.*

The danger was not averted by any wisdom or clarity of purpose in the West. It was scotched by forces implicit in the new Soviet policy as a whole. The new policy released great spiritual and intellectual reserves in Russia. There was a real ferment which was encouraged. The collective leaders were influenced by various considerations, including a genuine fear that Stalinism had suppressed individual initiative to a point detrimental to technical progress and industrial efficiency. They let the managers have their heads, and the volume of foreign travel by experts from the Soviet Union in the past three years must have been immense. We saw many of them in England : almost always on their best behaviour, relaxed, pathetically eager in search of ideas and comparisons. These contacts also extended to satellite countries and reinforced the propaganda for the new legalism and the criticisms of Stalinist excesses. What the Soviet leaders had not realised was that means condition ends. Once the lid is taken off, you cannot control the pressure in the pot. If Stalin had left his iron curtain at the Soviet frontier in 1945, things would have been different, for the Soviet Union is in its way an entity, and it is under control. There is only one party and only one framework. But in satellite countries there are other forces. None of them was remotely communist before the Red Army imposed the post-war régimes. Their nationalist tendencies are inevitably anti-Soviet. Three at least of them have a tradition of parliamentary politics. Material conditions were worse than in the Soviet Union. We have seen the results and, indeed, they have only begun.

The Poles have great national and racial unity and a powerful religious tradition, which neither Nazi nor Communist domination had modified. Their revolution in October, 1956, was skilfully executed and controlled and gave the Russians no chance of intervention, short of full-scale invasion. No doubt the Soviet leaders were reassured by the thought that they could, in the case of Poland, revert to Stalin's policy of playing off Poland against Germany by reopening the question of the Oder-Neisse frontier. In the case of Hungary their policy was clumsy,

confused and indecisive. But the real reason why the results were different in Hungary, was that forces were at work which no political juggling could have kept in play.

The Soviet Empire can never be the same again. In Hungary communists shared as fully as all the various kinds of anti-communists in the reaction against Soviet domination. Only a small group of hopelessly compromised secret police made any show of resistance to the revolution. Workers, peasants, intellectuals, middle-classes, the Armed Forces: the whole Hungarian people were represented one hundred per cent; and, most significant of all, the young people who ought to have been indoctrinated by their 12 years of communist education, were in the forefront of the movement. The same thing had already happened in Poland, where the climate of public opinion was such that those arrested after the Poznan rising were given a fair trial and relatively lenient sentences. The movement flowed back to the Soviet Union.

Here again, the unbelievable thing has happened that young people, indoctrinated not for 12 years but for all their lives, are questioning the basis of communism. Students at the University demanded greater freedom of studies and freer sources of information, not only about their own subjects but about international affairs. When the Hungarian revolution was going on, monitored B.B.C. news bulletins were typed out and posted on notice boards in the Moscow University. This is by no means the first evidence we have of this tendency. Communism claims to establish social justice, and there have been well-authenticated reports going back some three years that students and young intellectuals in Russia have looked about them and asked why they cannot find social justice in their own community.

In April, 1956, after Soviet attempts to 'improve cultural relations' had been met from our side with reminders that the jamming of foreign broadcasts is a deterrent to cultural relations, the jamming of B.B.C. Russian programmes ceased. It was resumed on October 28th, after the first stage of the Hungarian revolution had begun to have its impact on the Soviet Union. During the six months when the programmes were free from jamming, an impressive volume of evidence emerged of the intensive interest in these programmes, which are primarily informative. There were numerous suggestions about listening times and types of programmes, including requests for 'English by Radio.' It seems that almost every educated young Russian is learning or wishes to learn English.

### *The Future.*

Molotov has recently given a directive to writers and artists to use their talents in the service of the Party Line. He may well succeed in muzzling the established writers, but neither he nor anyone else can

prevent the managerial class, and the intellectuals from looking beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union and of Marx-Lenin-Stalinism. Nor can he stop the young people of the same classes from questioning the dogma which their experience contradicts. A very shrewd diplomatist remarked at the time of the Polish revolution : ' In ten years' time the Russians will realise what a great man Stalin was.' He meant that only the evil genius of a Stalin could maintain the sort of régime which the Soviet leaders want. Russia cannot hold together the Empire it is trying to hold without the utter ruthlessness of Stalin's policy. Even in Bulgaria, Czecho-Slovakia and Rumania, countries which have shown but little overt resistance, there has been unrest among intellectuals and students and the régimes, presumably on Soviet instructions, have rapidly introduced wage and pension increases to ameliorate conditions. The same has happened in Albania, the most isolated of the satellites, where the communist régime is perhaps the most precarious of all.

The Hungarian revolution marks the backward swing of the pendulum. The Soviet Empire is beginning to contract. Soviet policy will extend in other directions, as we have seen recently in the Middle East, but it cannot retain its grasp on Central Europe, any more than it can retain its grasp on the minds and spirits of men. This does not mean that Soviet troops will be out of Hungary tomorrow or the next day, or that there will be radical changes in the Kremlin the day after. It does mean that things have gone too far for anyone to put the clock back. The means adopted by the successors to Stalin have already modified their ends. If there were any doubts about it, they have been finally resolved by the spontaneous heroism of the Hungarian people.



## TWELVE DAYS OF FREEDOM

by  
GEORGE FISCHER

*George Fischer represents the new generation in the Communist countries, who grew up under the régime and were schooled and indoctrinated by it, and then rebelled against it. Aged 26, he fought in the Revolution on a two-point programme : First, get rid of the Russians. Second, get rid of the dictatorship of lies. Apart from this, he has no political affiliations.*

### *The Background.*

In order to understand the unexpected explosion of the Hungarian revolution, one must first briefly recall the course of the intellectual stream which led up to it. Rakosi, the Hungarian 'Stalin' had seized power in 1947/8 with the help of the Soviet forces which occupied the country. The Hungarian Communist Party, later renamed the Hungarian Worker's Party after absorbing the Social Democrats, seized the machinery of power. They introduced a one-party system and set about the liquidation of their political opponents, who were now designated as 'undesirable elements.' The period from 1948 to 1952 was the Hungarian people's bitterest time. Forced industrialisation, which was diametrically opposed to the natural characteristics of the country soon brought it to the brink of ruin. The pitiable economic position made the atmosphere so tense that the régime, which was not popular in any case, began to fear the worst. The government tried to stifle criticism by a policy of Terror. Alone among the Communist leaders, Imre Nagy—who was to become the leader of the Revolution—attempted to moderate the excesses of government through the Secret Police. Nagy was removed from the party's Political Committee in 1949 and withdrew from the political scene for a period of two years. It was at this time that he first become identified in the public mind as a moderate and an opponent of Stalinist methods.

In 1953, after the death of Stalin, the Hungarian Government sent some of its members, among them Rakosi, Gerö and Imre Nagy to

Moscow to seek the guidance of the new Soviet leaders on the policies to be pursued in the post-Stalin era. From this meeting Imre Nagy emerged victorious. In July 1953 he became Prime Minister in place of Rakosi, but Rakosi remained in the government as First Secretary of the Party, while Gerö exchanged the position of Deputy Prime Minister for the portfolio of Minister of the Interior. In official terminology, 'personal leadership' had been replaced by 'collective leadership,' and this formula remained in use up to the outbreak of the Revolution.

The programme of Nagy's new government of 1953 had a much more realistic appearance than that of its predecessors. Industrialisation was to be restricted to a few basic sectors, and the main weight of economic effort was directed towards a revival of Hungarian agriculture, which had been reduced to a pitiable state by Stalinist policies. Although this government was unable to bring about an actual economic upswing, it did reduce the pressure in the over-heated boiler. The details of the new programme offered some relaxation in comparison with the past, and this gave people some sort of hope.

In the spring of 1954 the 'Patriotic People's Front' was brought into being, and every Hungarian, no matter whether he belonged to the Party or not, could join it. In the elections of 1954, it was possible, for the first time in the Soviet era, to vote for or against the candidates put forward by the People's Front.

The apparent multi-party character of the People's Front was, however, illusory. For although the propaganda machine trumpeted to all the world the news of the establishment of the new 'democratic' mass-organisation and of its profound political significance, the reality of Soviet one-party politics continued in the background, as before.

These changes in name only had, however, one very useful and valuable result, namely the emergence of criticism. The new government was forced to express criticism of the 'mistakes' of the preceding government. This gave an opportunity for people to criticise indirectly and through oblique references, at least some of the more extreme manifestations of totalitarianism. For the first time for many years, the Hungarian intellectuals—or at least the minority among them which was still trusted by the régime—had the opportunity to offer critical comment on public affairs.

Unfortunately this hopeful period soon came to an end. In March, 1955, it was announced that Imre Nagy was ill. The illness was political. Nagy was charged with right-wing deviationism and removed from his post as Premier. His successor was Andras Hegedus.

### *The Impact of Anti-Stalinism.*

Meanwhile, however, the far-reaching changes in internal and external policy in the Soviet Union in 1956—particularly the building up of friendly contacts with Western countries, the reconciliation with

Jugoslavia and last, but not least, the criticism of Stalin and his ideology—had begun to have their effect in Hungary. Stalin, whom it had been one's duty for years to revere as an idol, and on whose account thousands upon thousands had been executed or imprisoned, suddenly ceased to be the all-seeing and infallible deity.

These events again gave an opportunity, this time to the whole of the Hungarian intellectual classes, to make their influence felt. Both in the Party and outside it, but particularly in the Party's 'voluntary' youth organisation, the D.I.Sz., of which every university or other student automatically became a member, a lively process of criticism began. At universities and schools, in factories and offices, voices were raised with ever-growing boldness against the prevailing régime and the desperate intellectual and economic plight to which it had reduced our country. The newspapers joined in the general movement of criticism although they were, of course, obliged to remain within the permitted limits of attacking only the errors of the past, and ascribing all 'mistakes' first to the personality cult and then to the 'Stalin personality cult.'

This momentary relaxation of the intellectual and physical Terror contained the seeds of many possibilities. On the pretext of attacking the errors of the Stalin period, a great deal of criticism of current ills was made public. The intellectuals exploited the possibilities offered by the new policy of the Soviet Union to achieve at least a measure of intellectual freedom. Two of the most significant and interesting manifestations of the movement were the Petöfi Club and the *Irodalmi Ujság* (Literary News).

The Petöfi Club had been established as the forum for discussions among 'progressive' intellectuals. 'Progressive' was the adjective officially used to describe the intellectuals who were more or less reliable in the government's eyes. This forum was organised by the D.I.Sz., and was intended to serve a double purpose. First, to provide visible proof of the liberality of the new Soviet policy; and secondly, to provide an opportunity for close supervision of these discussions, which might otherwise stray outside the permitted bounds.

The *Irodalmi Ujság* was the weekly paper of the Hungarian Writers' Association. In the post-Stalin period it became outstanding among the Hungarian press organs for its very sharply critical tone. It attained such popularity that when it appeared one had to go literally hunting for a copy. Inevitably the government refused, in spite of considerable public pressure, to permit an increase in its circulation. It is a remarkable fact that this purely intellectual journal achieved a wide readership among the workers, simply because it voiced their unspoken criticisms of the régime.

### *Petőfi Club and Poznan Rising.*

In the autumn of 1956 the control of both the Petőfi Club and the Writers' Journal slipped out of the government's hands. In September, at a discussion evening of the Petőfi Club, held in the Budapest Officers' Club, about 2,500 people packed the hall, while a further 3,000 remained outside in the street for lack of space.

This was the most memorable debate in the short history of the Petőfi Club. It began in the late afternoon and finished early on the next morning, but even by then only a small proportion of those who wanted to speak had been able to express their views. The subject was 'The Free Press,' but this topic, with its wide implications, gave rise to a far-reaching discussion in which the speakers cast aside all caution and attacked the régime in the bluntest possible terms for reducing Hungary to an impoverished slave state.

The news of this stormy meeting spread like wildfire in the city and throughout the country. It was the first time since 1947 that there had been a public and undisguised discussion of the intellectual and economic misery reigning in the country. I have deliberately stressed primarily the intolerable intellectual situation, because although the country's economic condition was extremely unfavourable, and the standard of living very low, it was nevertheless the intellectual oppression that was now felt to be intolerable and was most fiercely attacked. And the leaders of this attack were, above all, those 'Communist' scientists, writers and artists who had been supported and pampered by the government at a far higher standard than the average Hungarian, and enjoyed numerous privileges such as foreign travel and motor cars.

The government and the Party reacted at once to this unwelcome incident. Several of the speakers at the meeting were disciplined by the Party, and two writers, Dery and Tardos, were expelled. The meetings of the Petőfi Club were suspended and the newspapers attacked the 'right-wing deviationists.' The use of more forceful methods of repression which had been customary in earlier years was not considered feasible because public opinion, under the leadership of the intellectuals, had become a major force in the country.

The Poznan rising, in Poland, in June, 1956, played a major part in stimulating the critical mood of the Hungarian public. It was apparent, in spite of the misrepresentations of the press, that the mighty Soviet State was showing signs of weakness. The Hungarian press at first called the Polish insurgents bandits, but later spoke of the masses being led astray, which made it obvious that the Polish Government, too, had to admit, even if only in an indirect way, the shortcomings of the prevailing régime.

It was now impossible for the Party and the government to hold up the intellectual avalanche that had been started. In the prevailing phase of official policy, which was aimed at convincing the public that

'de-Stalinisation' meant a genuine move toward democracy, the régime was forced to compromise. And in this lay the seeds of disaster, for compromise led inevitably to more extreme demands which could not be reconciled with one-party Communist rule.

### *The Students' Initiative.*

The young people of Szeged University, breaking with the D.I.Sz., the Party's youth organisation, set up its own youth organisation, the M.E.F.E.Sz. (Association of Hungarian University and College Students), and then appealed to the other universities to follow their example. In Budapest the students of the Technical University set up the M.E.F.E.Sz. and began to draw up their demands. On October 21st a policy statement was drawn up by the students and soon the duplicated copies of this statement were widely circulated among the people of Budapest.

In the main, the students' demands were directed towards the establishment of a genuine liberal democracy. They called for free elections, a multi-party system, a free press, complete freedom of speech and the regularising of Hungary's relations with the Soviet Union. Rakosi, who had resigned in July, because of 'illness,' was to be called to account for his activities. The head of the Budapest Technical University, Professor Gillemot, together with the teaching staff, publicly endorsed the students' demands by submitting their signatures for the statement.

Having circulated their demands, the students announced a demonstration in support of the objectives which they had set out, and also in sympathy with the Polish people who had defied the Soviet government on October 19th by appointing Gomulka as their leader. The demonstration was to be held at 3 p.m. on October 23rd near the statue of General Bem, a Hungarian of Polish origin who had fought in the liberal Revolution of 1848.

It was characteristic of the government in power under Gerö that the official Kossuth radio-station broadcast on the morning of that day an order promulgated by Laszlo Piros, Minister of the Interior, stating that the demonstration of sympathy announced by the students would not be permitted. This order was the spark that set off the explosion. What had, up to then, been a movement known only to a relatively small circle of people, now became general knowledge through the radio announcement of the Government's decision. By mid-day the demonstration organised by the students had become so much a matter of common knowledge, and so popular, that the Minister of the Interior—probably because of pressure exerted by the other members of the government—was forced to rescind his order, and he announced over the radio that the demonstration, or, as he called it, the procession, was to be permitted. By this action the government admitted that it was

not so sure of itself as it had been in earlier years, and that it was aware of the feeling among the people of Budapest.

### *The Demonstration of October 23rd.*

It was an unforgettable experience when we advanced towards the Bem statue, with the disciplined ranks of the university students at the head. We sang old songs of the 1848 revolution, and at about 3 o'clock we reached the scene of the demonstration. A crowd of about 150,000 assembled and demonstrated with great enthusiasm, but with discipline, their sympathy with the happenings in Poland, and with the demands of the university students.

At the time of the demonstration the majority of the workers were still in the factories. Most of the demonstrators were students, and these were soon joined by office workers, engineers and intellectuals. In the afternoon, when the enormous crowd, breaking up into groups, was leaving the Bem statue and making for other parts of the town in order to carry on with the demonstration, they were joined by large numbers coming from the factories.

The general mood was one of suspense, awaiting the speech which was to be given on the radio that evening by the Prime Minister, Ernő Gerő, who had just returned from a visit to Yugoslavia. It was thought that Gerő would be bound to yield at least to some of the demands made at the demonstration and to announce a further move towards civic freedom.

The shock that was caused by the speech which he actually delivered, attacking the demonstrators—and particularly the students—in the most derogatory terms, is hard to convey. What had begun with enthusiasm and an expectation of a positive lead from the authorities, now turned to bitter hatred. Some of the demonstrators at once made for the broadcasting station and demanded that the points formulated by the students be read over the radio. Another section moved to the printing offices of the Party's official newspaper, with a similar purpose.

The fighting began at the broadcasting station. After a long and excited demonstration, the crowd tried to force a way into the building, whose defences had been strengthened with a contingent of members of the A.V.H. (State Security Police). The police attempted to scatter the crowd, now numbering several thousands, with bayonet charges. But this only made matters worse. The demonstrators retaliated with a hail of stones and bricks from a nearby building-site, and a full-scale battle began. When the crowd broke through the gate of the broadcasting station the first shots were fired. Many of the demonstrators collapsed, dead or injured, and these were the first martyrs of the revolution; for now the Hungarian people's lust for liberty was launched, smashing all barriers, on its bloody path towards freedom and independence.

Workers from the arms factories of Budapest, who were among the demonstrators returned to their factories to collect small arms and ammunition which they distributed among the crowd at the radio station.

The news of this battle spread through Budapest within minutes. People living near the barracks appealed to the Hungarian troops to join in the armed rebellion. Although the majority of the soldiers did not join the revolutionaries at this stage, they did hand over their weapons to them.

In view of the allegations that were made subsequently, that the arming of the rebel demonstrators within a few hours pointed to the existence of some prior organisation, I must emphasise that no such organisation existed. Within the Hungarian police state the creation of an organised force hostile to the government would have been impossible. The outbreak was entirely spontaneous, and on the night of October 23rd-24th fighting broke out in many different parts of the town, in small uncoordinated groups, which were easily crushed by the Soviet soldiers whose help had been summoned by the authorities.

While the struggle was beginning at the broadcasting station, there were demonstrations going on in many other parts of Budapest. Around the statue of Stalin which had been erected by the Soviet authorities after the war, a large crowd assembled. Soon after nine o'clock that night this hated symbol of foreign tyranny crashed to the ground amid scenes of wild enthusiasm. The pieces were carried in lorries to the National Theatre, and ten days later only a fragment remained ; the rest had been taken away as souvenirs of the revolution.

Another mass demonstration took place in front of the offices of *Szabad Nép*, the official organ of the Party. First, windows were smashed. Next, the crowd forced its way inside, and finally there was a wholesale destruction of everything within the premises.

Naturally, these violent demonstrations, which preceded the outbreak of armed revolution, had an immediate effect in government circles. During the night of October 23rd-24th, Gerö was removed from the post of Prime Minister, and Imre Nagy was announced as his successor. So far so good ; but Gerö retained the powerful position of First Secretary of the Party. Meanwhile, the struggle continued between the insurgents and the government troops, which consisted in the main of A.V.H. formations. Soviet units moved from their bases in the country towards Budapest, and with their help the government hoped to crush the revolution. But when the troops arrived we found that their fighting spirit was by no means good. Whether this was due to the long period they had spent on Hungarian soil, as garrison forces, or perhaps to a dislike of the particular task which they had been called upon to perform, one cannot tell. The fact remains, however, that although they used their weapons as ordered, there was no sign of the

ruthless battle spirit and indiscriminate brutality which was later shown by the second wave of Soviet forces that arrived on November 4th.

*The fight against tanks : October 24th.*

In the morning hours of October 24th the Soviet armoured formations began their attack. Battles took place, primarily for the possession of public buildings, and although the Soviets achieved some success, the revolution was by no means crushed. How the revolutionaries, equipped only with small arms and lacking anti-tank weapons, could stand up against such overwhelming odds, is one of those mysteries that emerge in revolutions. We had on our side a desperate courage and a fanatical desire to smash the régime of police-rule that had kept our country enslaved for more than ten years. We knew that this opportunity would not come again. We had, indeed, 'nothing to lose but our chains.'

The skill of our side in fighting an infantry battle with Molotov cocktails, rifles, sub-machine guns and heavy machine guns, was, of course, due (in the case of the younger people) to the thorough training provided in Soviet military formations which had been set up by the régime in all schools, universities and other educational centres. In addition, for the older men, there had been the experience of compulsory military service.

On the other side, there was only military discipline, weakened by the knowledge that the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. was being called upon to murder the proletariat of Hungary in order to preserve the Soviet Empire. Not, perhaps, a role in which troops educated in Marxism-Lenism and aware of the recent official denunciations of Stalin's crimes against other Socialist peoples, could be expected to give of their best. Our people banged on the sides of the tanks and shouted at the crews in Russian (which we had been compelled to learn at school) giving them the true facts of the situation. In the actual conduct of the battle, the Russians were weakened by their lack of infantry, and by the difficulties confronting tanks, without infantry support, in manoeuvring in confined built-up areas.

Although the broadcasting station was in the hands of the insurgents the installations had been largely destroyed during the fighting, so that the revolutionaries were unable to broadcast. This gave an advantage to the government propagandists who were able to continue broadcasting from the Kossuth radio station, which was held by Soviet forces. The government proclaimed a state of emergency and announced that the Soviet forces had been invited to help in restoring order, under the terms of the Warsaw Treaty. This was a gross distortion of the facts, since the Warsaw Agreement had been framed to enable the member countries to call on each other for help against external aggression. There was no provision for mutual assistance against popular revolutions within each other's territory.



After announcing the arrival of Soviet troops on this somewhat extraordinary pretext, the Government proceeded to declare martial law. Next, an ultimatum was issued to all insurgents carrying arms ; all those who had not laid down their weapons by 1 p.m. (on October 24th) were to be tried by summary court. Later the time limit was extended to 5 p.m. and a curfew was imposed on the whole population.

Meanwhile, the insurgents, who had been fighting disjointed local battles in various parts of the town converged in the evening at a few central points, where they now constituted a substantial force. The main focal point, near the centre of the town, was the Killian Barracks. This building, which was subsequently completely destroyed, stood on one of the main thoroughfares of Budapest and was a well-known landmark of the city. In recent years it had not been used as a regular barracks, but had become the home of the so-called 'C' formations. These units consisted of men called up for military service but rejected for combatant duties owing to their 'unreliable' background. The men of the 'C' units were given no weapon-training, and served their time as unpaid labour on building sites or on the land, or in any other task to which the state might assign them.

With this background in mind, one can readily understand why the units in the Killian barracks were the first to join the revolution and why this barracks became a central headquarters for the insurgents. It took some time, however, for the men in the 'C' formations to make their presence felt in the actual fighting, because the supply of weapons within the barracks was small, and arms had to be obtained from elsewhere.

Another military formation which aided the insurgents at an early stage in the rising, was the police force engaged on traffic duties. They handed over their weapons as soon as the revolution began, and many of them joined the freedom fighters.

### *The massacre of October 25th.*

On the morning of October 25th the fighting continued. The Soviet forces, supported by the A.V.H., greatly outnumbered the insurgents. But the revolutionaries were now better organised and their fighting spirit was unbroken, in spite of the overwhelming odds against them. The government radio station tried to mislead the people with false reports of the defeat of revolutionary forces, and called on the industrial workers to return to the factories. Many complied and set off for work. But the effect was the opposite to what had been desired. Had they remained at home, the workers might well have believed that the revolution was over, and that further resistance was hopeless. But when they arrived in the centre of the city, they saw for themselves that there was no truth in the government announcement, and re-joined the freedom fighters.

On the 25th, at about 11 a.m., there occurred what was perhaps the most tragic event of the revolution. A crowd of about 2,000 people, on their way to the Parliament building to demand Gerö's removal and the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, met with four Soviet tanks guarding the approaches to the Parliament building. At the sight of the unarmed crowd the tank crews reacted in a surprising manner. Instead of shooting at the demonstrators they allowed them to hoist the Hungarian flag on the vehicles, and then proceeded with them towards the Parliament building. As the demonstrators arrived in the large open square in front of the Parliament building, together with the Soviet tanks, the A.V.H. formations, established in the surrounding buildings, opened fire. Hundreds of people fell dead on the ground. This frightful slaughter was stopped by the Soviet tank-crews, who turned their guns on the A.V.H. men on the rooftops, and with their help the survivors were able to escape from the square. After the removal of the several hundred bodies, the road-surface and pavements were red for days with the blood of the victims. This butchery inevitably inflamed the bitter hatred of the A.V.H. that was a driving force throughout the course of the revolution.

In the early afternoon Gerö was removed from his position as First Secretary of the Party and in his place Kadar was appointed. Later on the same day the radio appealed to the Hungarian people to display national flags on their houses. The government had advanced a further step on its road of gradual alignment with the aims of the revolution.

### *The New Democracy.*

Meanwhile, the revolution in Budapest had found its echo in the provinces. In Miskolc, Györ, Pecs and most other provincial centres, the freedom fighters seized power. Györ and Miskolc radio stations came on the air as free transmitters. In the villages, the chairmen of local councils and the party secretaries were removed from office, the compulsory levy of agricultural produce was stopped and the producers' co-operatives were dissolved.

Although the tone of official announcements on Radio Budapest was gradually becoming more conciliatory, the call for surrender of arms by the insurgents was repeated unchanged. There was no response. The government announced that Soviet troops would withdraw from the capital only after order had been restored; but the insurgents refused to lay down their arms while the Soviet troops remained on Hungarian soil. In the end it was the revolutionaries' view which won the day, because on October 28th the government announced an unconditional amnesty for freedom fighters, regardless of whether they surrendered their arms or not.

Meanwhile, on October 27th, the Budapest Radio, calling itself the 'Free Kossuth Radio,' had announced the formation of a new government, and the end of the one-party system. Among those named

as prospective members of the new government were the ex-president of the Republic, Zoltan Tildy, and J. Kovacs—both leaders of the Smallholders' Party, which had been dissolved by the Communist régime—and Anna Kethly, the leader of the Social Democratic Party. The genuineness of this move was inevitably suspect. Of the politicians named, only Zoltan Tildy actually spoke on the radio. He announced the re-constitution of the Smallholders' Party, and called on the former members of the party to support the government.

J. Kovacs was not in Budapest, but was undergoing a course of treatment at Pecs, because his long imprisonment in the Soviet Union (1948-55) had undermined his health. Thus at the time of the announcement he did not know of the role planned for him in the new government, while Anna Kethly was not prepared to make any announcement on the radio or identify herself with the government until she had reached agreement with them on the nature of the policies to be pursued.

The beginning of lively political activity indicated the growing independence of the regime from Soviet tutelage. The workers' councils that had emerged from the revolution as organs of self-government took charge of the factories. Building repairs were organised. The direction of factory operations was taken over by the engineers, administrative staff and works foremen, acting through the workers' councils.

The transformation spread rapidly into the sphere of public administration. In the smaller towns and rural districts the local councils which had operated as the bureaucratic functionaries of the central government were replaced by genuine organs of self-government called 'national commissions' or sometimes 'revolutionary councils,' elected by the local population. In the larger towns and in the capital, the district councils were formed first, and these, in turn, elected central national committees.

In the central government departments the process was slower and less complete. The force of the revolution derived from the people: and in the local government bodies close to the people the effect was immediate and decisive. But in the upper levels of government the impact of popular pressure was more remote. The civil servants appointed by the old régime retained their posts and attempted, in unobtrusive ways, to slow down the process of change and insure themselves against the return of the old order.

Perhaps the outstanding case of the survival of members of the *ancien régime* in high places was that of our representative at the United Nations. While the whole country was locked in a deadly struggle to regain its independence and freedom, Hungary's representative at U.N.O. remained—as before—the notorious Peter Kos, otherwise known as Lev Konduktorov, a Soviet oil engineer who had entered Hungarian diplomacy in 1951. He tried by every means in his power

to distract the attention of the United Nations from the plight of our country and the activities of the Soviet forces—until, at length, he was replaced.

### *The Revolution consolidates.*

The principal objectives of the revolution had been the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the securing of national independence through free elections, and the immediate dissolution of the secret police, the A.V.H. The road leading to the attainment of these objectives was hard and strewn with blood, but on the sixth day of the revolt success appeared to be within our grasp. On this day, October 28th, the Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, announced in a radio talk the annulment of the martial law measure taken in connection with the earlier state of national emergency; the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the capital to their bases in Hungary; and a promise that discussions would be initiated with the Soviet Government on the removal of these forces from Hungarian territory. The discussions were to take place on a basis of equality and mutual friendship.

The country received the Prime Minister's announcement with great enthusiasm, but confidence was by no means established. The freedom-fighters, in their fortified positions, refused to lay down their arms so long as a single Russian soldier remained in the country. The insurgent formations were now an organised force, with leaders from among the ranks of the intellectuals, workers and army officers. The Universities and technical colleges had set up their own battalions, with the help of officers from the military faculties.

On October 29th fighting had generally ceased, and only a few local skirmishes continued in the countryside. On the next day, Soviet troops began their withdrawal from the capital. They observed the cease-fire scrupulously, and the only fighting that took place was with members of the secret police.

The people's hatred of the secret police was unbounded. Officially the A.V.H. organisation had been dissolved but individual members were still engaged in isolated fighting. Those who fell into the hands of the crowds were given no mercy; the memory of their professional activities as mass murderers and torturers was too recent. Those who surrendered to the freedom fighters were imprisoned and then dealt with according to their record. The documents discovered by the freedom fighters in the former Ministry of the Interior and elsewhere, gave a new and comprehensive insight into the activities of the A.V.H., which were shown to have surpassed in bestiality even the record of the German Gestapo during the war years. Among the many and varied secret police systems of the 20th century, the A.V.H. will always hold a place of honour as one of the most inhuman manifestations of our age.

As the fighting came to an end the people set about the removal of the concrete reminders of the twelve bad years that had passed. Rakosi

and his associates, who had delighted in the adoration of the Red Star, had never missed an opportunity of demonstrating Hungary's loyalty to that great symbol—at least in external manifestations. Nearly every building in the capital displayed the Red Star, while on public buildings and in the larger squares, there was invariably some outward and visible sign of our subservience to the Soviet Union. Now, literally thousands of red stars, monuments and columns were pulled down or destroyed.

With astounding rapidity our intellectual and literary life, which had for so long been stultified by bureaucratic control, launched into a vigorous unfettered revival. By October 30th the half-dozen daily papers which had hitherto been printed in the capital, were replaced by fifteen dailies. Almost overnight we were suddenly confronted with an unprecedented spate of analyses, commentaries and discussions, covering every aspect of home and foreign affairs, as well as the record of the past twelve years, examined with the help of official documents that had come to light during the revolution.

Although, by this time, the factories which had suffered damage in the revolution were restored to working order and the workers' councils were in full control of the production system, work was not resumed. In accordance with a resolution of the parliament of workers' councils only the factories engaged in the food industry re-started work or carried on without a break. For the rest, the order was to remain on strike until the Soviet troops had left Hungarian soil. The strike was used as an insurance against backsliding by the government, which could not be wholly trusted as its personnel still consisted largely of members of the old régime.

### *The new threat appears.*

On October 30th, when the majority of the Soviet troops had left the inner parts of Budapest, the Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, promised that free elections would be held within a short time, and recommended that, following the abolition of the one-party system, five parties might be considered as contestants in the elections: the Smallholders, the Christian Democrats, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (the Communists' new name), the Peasants' Party, and the Social Democrats.

But the ominous clouds had not yet disappeared from the horizon of our reviving democracy. The troops withdrawing from Budapest were still in the outskirts, and some units had even dug themselves in. One after another, disturbing reports reached the capital. Strong Soviet formations had crossed the Hungarian frontier from Czechoslovakia, from the Soviet Union, and from Rumania. The new troops advanced into the country and occupied the principal airfields. When the Hungarian government protested to the Soviet command, they were told that this action was necessary to safeguard the withdrawal of Soviet citizens who had been living in Hungary. The government were,

above all, anxious to avoid further bloodshed and they accepted the Soviet explanations.

On November 1st, Imre Nagy took the final step in acceding to the demands of the Hungarian people. He announced that Hungary had withdrawn from the Warsaw Pact, and proclaimed the neutrality of the country, while appealing at the same time to the United Nations to safeguard our new status. I cannot express the mood that this announcement called up in us. We all felt that it was not in vain that thousands had perished; independence and freedom had been restored to our country and after the bizarre nightmare of the post-war years we could at last look forward to a normal and decent life in which one could work and strive for genuine worthwhile ends.

Unfortunately, our joy was not unalloyed. Further disquieting reports were reaching Budapest. Large formations of Soviet troops were pouring into the country. They occupied the key points of the railway and road systems, and sent reinforcements to the airfields. The Hungarian military units offered no resistance; Hungary had proclaimed her neutrality, and our government wished to avoid at all costs any provocative action which might cast doubt on that status. The Prime Minister addressed repeated protests to the Soviet Embassy, which were without result, and then appealed once more to the United Nations to guarantee Hungary's neutrality and to take up the issue of Soviet intervention.

The strike in the factories continued, and the determination to sustain it was redoubled in the face of the news of the Soviet invasion. Food supplies, however, were amply maintained—much better than in time of peace and good order under the Communist régime. For the peasants put forth a special effort to supply the towns, and particularly Budapest, in spite of the fact that they received little or no payment.

The unfavourable news reports became more and more disturbing. What was the objective of the ever-growing Soviet army within Hungary? Would the United Nations help? Would the Western countries take action to safeguard the fruits of this revolution which had been won at such immense sacrifice?

### *The Russians return.*

On November 3rd the Government began detailed discussions with the Soviet authorities concerning the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary. Senior Russian officers represented the Soviet Government. Some reports spoke of Zhukov himself being in Budapest. The discussions were broken off in the afternoon, and it was agreed that they were to be continued in the evening at the headquarters of the Soviet Command.

A press conference for foreign journalists was to take place at five o'clock in the afternoon in the Parliament building. The group of Western journalists assembled in the capital was the largest that had

been seen in the country for ten years. One of the main points of the press conference was to be the announcement of the formation of a new government and the details of its composition, comprising the newly constituted parties. However, the information released at this conference never reached the newspapers for during the night all communications with the outside world were cut off, and on the next day the news that awaited the Western correspondents was of quite a different kind.

The Hungarian government's mission to the Soviet High Command consisting of General Maleter, Minister of Defence, and Major General Kovacs, Chief of the General Staff, had arrived at Soviet headquarters according to plan—but they never returned. Following the pattern of a previous conference of this kind during the war, when the Soviets invited a group of Polish generals to discuss the future of their country, this meeting had been arranged with only one purpose in view: namely to deprive the Hungarian Army of its leaders by the simple device of arresting them. This characteristic manoeuvre, illustrating the subtleties of Marxist-Leninist morality, was the final step in the preparations that had been made in the past week, through the extensive Soviet troop movements. All was now ready and it only remained for brutality to complete what duplicity had so effectively begun.

At dawn, on November 4th, the Red Army gave us a frightful awakening. When the combined fire of the heavy artillery surrounding Budapest awoke me from my sleep I felt that something had snapped inside me. With crushing weight, the nightmare of a future without prospects was on us—and we thought we had already wiped it out once. In the early morning hours the strategically important points of the capital were occupied by Soviet tanks. The Hungarian soldiers and freedom fighters advanced fearlessly into battle. But the Red Army, with its vast weight of men and equipment could be held up for only a short time by the handful of Hungarians. From the behaviour of the Soviet troops it became clear that they had received strict orders to crush resistance without mercy. They carried out their orders cruelly, amid the dead bodies of the heroes of freedom fighting for their independence, and the corpses of women and children that will cry for ever in accusation.

At the same time, the Moscow propaganda machine began its ideological campaign. For Hungarian public opinion, inured though it was to continual lies, it was too much to hear Moscow's cynical excuse: 'We have come at the request of the Hungarian government to help the Hungarian workers to destroy the Fascists who are trying to seize power.'

In fact, the legal Hungarian Government, if indeed it could be called legal, for it did not come into being through regular elections, no longer existed. With the exception of Imre Nagy, who had taken refuge in the Yugoslav Legation, and Anna Kethly, who had been unable to

return to the country from the Social Democrats' congress in Vienna, the members of the government were in the hands of the Soviet Army. There was, of course, the Kadar government which had been set up at the headquarters of the invading Soviet Army, but owing to the exigencies of military surprise this puppet régime could not be established until after the Soviet attack had been launched and it was not, therefore, in a position to ask for the military 'assistance' which actually began before it had come into existence. The assertion of the Soviet authorities that they had been invited into the country, which appears to have impressed at least one outstanding personality in the Western world, and also Mr. Nehru, was nothing more than a barefaced lie.

### *The Soviet victory.*

The struggle of the tiny nation of nine millions against a power with a population of over a hundred million had made its mark on world opinion, but had failed to win for the Hungarian people the freedom which they had so amply deserved. The ruins of dwelling-houses along the main streets of Budapest bear witness to the 'friendly' Soviet help which we received to enable us to defeat the non-existent Fascists. The last places to fall to the Soviet troops were the suburb of Csepel in Budapest, a notoriously 'red' district inhabited by industrial workers ; and, in the provinces, the town of Stalinvaros, the pride of the Communist régime, built since the war as the centre of our heavy industry. The fact that these workers' communities held out longest against the Marxist saviours is sufficient commentary on the political character of the revolution—and of the forces that suppressed it.

The Kadar government remained at the Soviet headquarters in Szolnok while the fighting was going on in Budapest. In their announcements they continually stressed that they would adopt all the objectives of the revolution, but that order must first be restored with the help of the Soviet troops, and that the Fascist elements whom the Nagy regime had been unable to control, must be eliminated.

Kadar's group tried everything to induce the workers to go back to work. An attempt was made to control the supply of food so that only those who came to work in the factories could obtain their rations. But this did not succeed, partly because the stocks of food in the capital were temporarily plentiful, because of the special efforts that had been made by the peasants during the days of freedom, and partly because the workers who arrived at the factories simply took the food and then carried on with a 'sit-down' strike.

The universities and schools were closed for an indefinite period, so as to restrict the opportunities of the students to organise themselves. On the radio, and in the new official organ of the Party, the *Nepakarat* ('Will of the People') which had been renamed to distinguish it from its



predecessor of unhallowed memory, the *Szabad Nep* ('Free People'), there was talk of the withdrawal of Soviet forces after the re-establishment of order, and of the realisation of the revolutionary demands. In fact, however, the new régime used every means in its power to destroy its opponents and those suspected of 'non-cooperation' with it. The mass arrests and the reappearance of old familiar slogans such as the 'leading role of the Party' pointed the way to the reality of Hungary's future under the Kadar régime.

To-day, the plight of Hungary is, in some ways, worse than ever before. Having so nearly won their independence and freedom the Hungarians have seen it destroyed once more, and all their hard-won gains drowned in a sea of blood and suffering. One cannot adequately convey the bitter despair of a whole nation : suffice it to say that there are 170,000 Hungarian refugees.

# FROM VICTORY TO DEFEAT

THE SECOND PHASE OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

by

PAUL KATONA

*Paul Katona is a graduate of Pecs University in Hungary who emigrated before the war, first to the U.S.A., and then to Britain. As a writer on international affairs, specializing in the Soviet countries, he gives the outside observer's view of the stages that led from the apparent victory of the Hungarian revolution on October 28th to its final defeat in mid-November.*

On October 28th, Imre Nagy, the Hungarian Premier, conceded victory to the revolution. Acting under the pressure of the Transdanubian National Council which reportedly threatened him with a march on Budapest, he issued an unconditional cease-fire order to the forces under his command. He publicly admitted that the revolution was a national democratic movement, and not a 'counter-revolution' as it had hitherto been officially described. At the same time he announced that agreement had been reached between himself and the Soviet Commander in Chief on the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest, and that negotiations on their withdrawal from the whole of Hungary were about to start. There was no longer any question of 'surrender' by the insurgents as a pre-condition; the new formula was that they should 'give up their arms' to the Hungarian army units which would replace Soviet troops in the capital. But the revolution claimed total victory and, in practice, even this disguised condition had to be waived.

On Monday, October 29th, *Szabad Nep*, official organ of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party, appeared with the Kossuth coat-of-arms—the symbol of the Revolution—on its front page and attacked the official Soviet Russian journal *Pravda*. The Soviet paper had claimed on the previous day that in Hungary an anti-popular adventure had collapsed. *Szabad Nep*—for years a regional *Pravda*—branded this remark of the former oracle as insulting and stated that the events in Hungary were neither anti-popular, nor an adventure, and that there had been no collapse.

The State Security Police were officially disbanded, the workers' and young people's militia that had emerged from the revolution was re-organised as a force assisting the Army and Police, and a National Guard was recruited for the maintenance of public order. This meant political victory for the revolution—but the Soviet troops were still in Budapest. Marshal Zhukov, at a reception at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow, declared that the Soviet Union had enough forces in Hungary to quell the revolt and maintain order; they would withdraw as soon as the rebels had laid down their arms.

At that moment, however, the Soviet Marshal was behind the march of time. For on the next day—October 30th—Moscow Radio announced that the Soviet Government had issued an order to the Commander in Chief in Budapest to withdraw from the capital. The same broadcast stated that the Soviet Government was prepared to review the position of Soviet troops in other parts of Hungary, and in Poland and Rumania.

On the same day Nagy promised free elections, abolished the one-party system in Hungary, reshuffled his Cabinet and recognised as 'democratic organs of local autonomy' the revolutionary Councils and Committees that had been set up throughout the country. His Government also acknowledged and confirmed the newly formed Revolutionary National Defence Committee representing the soldiers who took part in the revolutionary fighting. This body at once dismissed those generals who 'retarded the march of events.' The week-old revolution now had its own Army.

In the afternoon at 3 o'clock the Air Force Command of the new Hungarian Army issued a twelve hour ultimatum to the Soviet troops in Budapest to leave the Hungarian capital. This was by no means an empty threat, for the Revolution had, at that crucial stage, some fifteen Hungarian divisions at its disposal. The international significance of this local military victory was, however, overshadowed by another ultimatum issued ninety minutes later, by the British and French Governments, to Egypt; and by the Franco-British veto against the cease-fire order of the Security Council, in defiance of the United Nations.

### *The Turning Point.*

The 30th of October was—or could have been—a turning point in the history of Hungary and of the world. The revolution had a victorious army, which had driven the invader out of the capital, and by now it had its leader in the person of Imre Nagy who before history solemnly declared that he had not been responsible for the decrees on martial law and the calling in of Soviet troops to Budapest. These decrees, the official announcement said, had been issued to 'our common grief and our common shame' without the knowledge of Imre Nagy. Political parties—the Smallholders, the National Peasants and the

Social Democrats—were revived, and the old leadership and staff of Budapest Radio were replaced. 'Free Kossuth Radio'—as it was re-named on October 30th—declared that for long years past the radio had been an instrument of lies: it lied during the night and in the daytime, it lied on all wavelengths. In future, it said, new voices on the old wavelengths would tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'

If, as Professor Seton-Watson pointed out both before and after the event, the Western Powers had been willing to enter into some arrangement with the Russians concerning Germany, in exchange for Soviet concessions in Eastern Europe, the Hungarian problem might have been solved, and Hungary could have been saved. But this would have required undivided attention to Europe during the critical days and hours, and it would have required Western unity, which was fatally damaged by the Anglo-French veto and ultimatum. The soundness of Professor Seton-Watson's suggestion was borne out by Krushchev's statement of November 18th: 'If you withdraw your troops from Germany, France and Britain—I am speaking of American troops—we will not stay one day in Poland, Hungary and Rumania.'

Why, one may ask, in the face of this failure of the Western powers to give him diplomatic assistance, did Imre Nagy proceed on the path of national independence beyond reasonable limits? Why did he not stop the revolutionary tide on October 30th, when it had already achieved more than Poland but still stood before the fatal Rubicon?

No doubt there were many reasons, but, in the main, the answer is that Imre Nagy lacked the power to stop it, even if he had wanted to do so. He had accepted the position of leader of the Revolution under the compulsion of events and in order to save his country from chaos. But he could not control the movement that had forced him into the lead.

#### *Soviet military movements.*

At the time when Soviet troops began the evacuation of Budapest—on October 30th—several Soviet units had already left the country. In retrospect it is quite obvious that these were so-called 'contaminated' troops, some of them stationed in Hungary for an extended period. There had been strange instances of 'fraternisation' and even desertions; some of the troops were no longer reliable for use against a nation in revolt. The Soviet troops stationed in Hungary under the Warsaw Treaty were morally—and some units also militarily—beaten. Simultaneously with their withdrawal, fresh troops began to pour in. This strange two-way traffic began on the crucial day of October 30th, and assumed very large proportions on the following day. On October 31st alone, the first day on which Budapest itself was free of Soviet troops, more than 600 Russian tanks crossed the Hungarian frontier

from the East. Imre Nagy first raised the matter of Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty on that day, but he unilaterally denounced it only on November 1st. By then several Soviet armoured divisions had crossed the Eastern frontier, a ring of Russian troops encircled the capital, and large areas of Hungary were occupied by fresh Soviet troops which were taking control of railways, roads and airfields.

When Imre Nagy declared Hungary's neutrality, he was already caught in the mousetrap. There was no risk involved in 'provoking' the Russians: he knew that only a miracle could save the country, and he tried to invoke the miracle by formidable diplomatic activity. He summoned Andropov, the Soviet Ambassador, protested against the entry of fresh military formations, and gave notice of the immediate termination of the Warsaw Treaty. He sent a telegram to Marshal Voroshilov asking him to fix a date for negotiation on the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and informed all heads of accredited diplomatic missions on the situation.

In a telegram to Mr. Hammarskjöld, Imre Nagy notified the United Nations that new Soviet military formations had entered Hungary and that the Hungarian Government denounced the Warsaw Treaty. He asked the United Nations to guarantee the neutrality of Hungary. This was an S.O.S. to the world and to the United Nations. The timing, just as two days before, was fatal. The telegram reached New York during the emergency session of the General Assembly in which the vast majority of the member-States, including the U.S.A., ostracised Britain and France for their defiance of the cease-fire order in the Middle East. Never before was the unity of the Western Powers so badly needed and never before was this unity so badly shattered.

### *The Second Soviet Intervention.*

On Saturday, November 3rd, Imre Nagy formed his new National Government, comprising representatives of the newly revived democratic parties. Nagy himself and Kadar were the two remaining Communist members—or so it seemed. In fact, Kadar was no longer in Budapest when his name appeared on the Government list. He had departed for Szolnok on the previous day and, at the Russian Headquarters there, he was forming another—one-Party—Government under Soviet auspices.

Imre Nagy's new Minister of National Defence, General Maleter—a hero of the Revolution—as head of a four-man delegation began negotiations with General Malinin, the Soviet Commander, on the withdrawal of Soviet troops, at ten o'clock on Saturday morning. Maleter and his three companions never returned, and the Soviet troops attacked Budapest at dawn on Sunday, November 4th. The destruction of Budapest had begun.

Later in the day Kadar was installed at Szolnok, as head of a puppet Government which declared that it had asked for the intervention of Soviet troops. This was an obvious impossibility—for that Government had not even been in existence at the hour of the attack—but truth had been among the earliest casualties of the Kadar counter-revolution. It took three days before the Kadar Government could establish itself in the capital—or rather in its ruins, but heavy fighting was still far from ending. The resistance in Budapest and in the provinces was bitter, desperate and tenacious beyond human imagination.

Fighting had not subsided before November 12th, more than a week after the onslaught, and even then it ended in a stalemate rather than effective occupation. Soviet troops held only key positions and the defenders—or survivors—changed their weapons and tactics instead of admitting defeat. Huge silent demonstrations and various forms of active resistance—distribution of 'subversive' pamphlets, posters, sporadic guerilla activities and large scale strikes were the forms of warfare against the invader. The Soviet forces also changed their tactics and began to use mass deportations—instead of bullets—to decimate the population. Hungary, preferring to imitate the Austrian model instead of following the Polish example, was threatened with the fate of Latvia.

#### *Kadar tries Appeasement.*

Meanwhile the puppet Government of Kadar began its efforts at appeasement. In its inaugural programme it promised that after the restoration of calm and order it would begin negotiations with the Soviet Government and other parties to the Warsaw Treaty on the withdrawal of Soviet troops. It tried to justify its existence by stating that, with the help of an armed force—standing on the basis of 'Socialism' and able to defend it—the regime had to smash the 'sinister forces of reaction' against which Imre Nagy had been powerless.

The objectives of the revolution were adopted by Kadar as his own. 'The Party and Government' said an article in his paper *Nepszabadsag* on November 10th 'regard as sacred and will defend all the achievements which the great national democratic movement launched on 23rd October had won.' On the next day Kadar declared in a broadcast that 'there is not a single man or leader in Hungary to-day holding State or Party office who would wish to restore the old mistaken policy or methods of leadership.' He promised the replacement of the Red Star by the Kossuth coat-of-arms, Hungarian uniforms for the Army instead of the Russian garments introduced by the Rakosi regime, the abolition of compulsory Russian tuition and the purge of Stalinists from the Party. The Executive Committee of the Party subsequently declared that those who had been 'exponents of the harmful policy of the Rakosi clique can in future hold no Party or Government function.'

On November 15th Kadar went even further and promised free and honest elections and a multi-party system. 'We may be thoroughly beaten at the elections' he said, and warned his audience: 'the workers' power can be killed not only by bullets but also by the ballot paper,' but 'the Party has the strength to reconquer the confidence of the workers.'

On the face of it, Kadar's programme would have surpassed all the expectations of October 23rd. It was far-reaching and, in appearance, quite honest. Nevertheless it met with obstinate opposition, commanded no respect and had no response whatsoever. Why? First, because it came too late. The people had already tasted real freedom—for a few days—and paid for it with blood and immeasurable suffering. Secondly, nobody trusted Kadar. The era of promises was over and the people had learned their lesson from 'negotiations' with the Soviet authorities. The treachery and brutality of the onslaught of November 4th could not be undone.

### *The Return to Terror.*

It took some two or three weeks before the Kadar regime and its Russian sponsors realised that the policy of compromise and concessions and the cautious lip-service to the achievements of the revolution would pay no dividends. A gradual reversion to political terror and naked oppression was inevitable. The turning point was the decision to eliminate Imre Nagy as a potential bridge between past and future and a symbol of reconciliation between the regime and the nation. Kadar gave an undertaking to the Yugoslav Government to guarantee the safety of Imre Nagy who had taken refuge at the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest. Upon leaving the sanctuary, however, Nagy was detained and abducted by Soviet security forces, on November 22nd. The gloves were off. There was no longer any pretence of legality or respect for the aspirations of the nation.

From then on, the regime has advanced through all the familiar stages of the establishment of totalitarian rule: special courts have been established, with the power to impose the death penalty for any manifestation of disagreement with the regime; the intellectual, military and political leaders of the revolution have been gradually eliminated by imprisonment, exile or execution, and all possibilities of independent thought and action systematically extinguished. Hungary is now restored to her place in the ranks of the satellites. The silence of conformity, which is apparently the highest ideal of the Soviet Peoples' Democracies, has descended upon her people.

But that, of course, is not the end of the story. It is the end only of the beginning of the first major rebellion against Soviet rule in Eastern Europe, but not by any means of the last. Communist parties throughout the world have been profoundly shaken by the cruel Soviet intervention in Hungary and Communist ideology—as a promoter of Soviet power politics—has suffered a setback.

Within the satellite states, the last vestiges of voluntary co-operation have come to naught. Propaganda on proletarian internationalism, the artificial zeal of production drives, the disguise of exploitation by treaties of 'mutual' economic assistance, must now be replaced by direct military rule. The Soviet leaders know as well as anyone that one cannot permanently sit on bayonets. Unless a world war comes to their aid, in which they could sustain their position in these countries by military force, they will be obliged, sooner or later, to write off Hungary—and possibly the entire satellite Empire.

A situation might well develop in which the satellite countries, which were intended to act as a protective shield for the U.S.S.R., become a menace to the Soviet motherland. Future developments mainly depend on the degree of hostility against the Soviet Union in the camp of her 'friends' who, by concerted action, may achieve what her Western 'enemies' are impotent to perform.



## CORPORATE DECLARATIONS

*In response to our appeal for expressions of solidarity with Hungarian scholars, we were notified of the following corporate declarations. All those received before the end of November were included in the document presented to the Soviet Embassy and Hungarian Legation in London on December 4th, 1956, together with the names of individuals subscribing to our Statement on Hungary.*

### **DOWNING COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.**

At a meeting of the Governing Body of Downing College, Cambridge, held on November 9th, 1956, it was agreed unanimously by the sixteen Fellows present that their corporate name should be added to the list of scholars proclaiming their solidarity with the Hungarian Universities.

### **AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS.**

As a result of the appeal for support from the Committee on Science and Freedom, the Council of the American Association of University Professors unanimously adopted at its meeting on November 17th, 1956, the following resolution :

‘The Council of the American Association of University Professors expresses its admiration for the heroic struggle of the students and faculties of Hungarian universities for freedom, and its sympathy with their aspirations for the free society necessary to the scientific and scholarly pursuits to which we are all dedicated. We urge all academic communities where freedom is valued to support their Hungarian colleagues by every feasible means and we ask the governments and international agencies of the world to extend their assistance.’

## **SOUTH ATLANTIC MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION.**

On December 6th, the Committee on Science and Freedom was informed that the following declaration had been passed unanimously at the Annual Meeting of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, representing university departments of English and modern foreign languages in the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia :

‘ The members of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association are deeply shaken by the horrors committed by the Communist regime in Hungary and by their Russian associates, in violation of all considerations of humanity. The members of this Association hereby unanimously express their deeply felt protest against these atrocities and voice their admiration for the heroism of the Hungarian people who are fighting for human rights and for the freedoms essential to civilized existence. They commend our own Government for its recent action in the admission of refugees from Hungary and urge that all other possible steps be taken in aid of Hungarian victims of brutal oppression.’

## **DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, CANADA.**

The following message was received on December, 10th, from the Faculty Association of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia :

At a recent meeting of the Faculty Association of Dalhousie University, attended by 21 members of Faculty, a motion was passed :

‘ That this Association accede to the request of the Committee on Science and Freedom for a proclamation of moral support in favour of academic freedom for Hungarian university teachers.’

## **POLISH FREE SCHOOL OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE IN LONDON.**

In response to the appeal for support from the Committee on Science and Freedom the following message was received on December 7th, from the Polish Free School of Political and Social Science in London, signed by the Chairman, Dean, and Secretary General of the School :

‘ We express, on behalf of all our professors, lecturers and students, our strong protest against the Soviet military and political intervention in Hungary, and our whole-hearted solidarity with the Hungarian universities in their heroic struggle for freedom and national independence.’

### **FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN.**

On November 28th, the Committee on Science and Freedom received the following telegram from the Dean of the faculty of Philosophy in the Free University of Berlin :

‘ 174 members of the staff of the Free University of Berlin have signed declaration of solidarity with Hungarian universities.’

### **ESTONIAN INTELLECTUALS IN SWEDEN.**

The following telegram was received on December 1st, by the Committee on Science and Freedom :

‘ We, 92 Estonian intellectuals, present at the anniversary of Tartu University, celebrated on November 30th, by the Estonian Learned Society in Sweden, express our deep concern at the fate of our Hungarian colleagues and condemn their new enslavement. We crave freedom for their scholarly pursuits and for their contacts with scholars in other countries.’

### **PISA UNIVERSITY, ITALY.**

The following telegram was received on December 22nd, from the Dean of the Faculty of Science in the University of Pisa, Italy :

‘ The professors of the Faculty of Science of the University of Pisa wish to express, in response to the letter of November 6th from the Committee on Science and Freedom, their complete agreement with the initiative taken by the Committee, and proclaim their solidarity with the appeal on behalf of Hungarian Scientists.’

### **CHRISTIAN UNION OF INTELLECTUALS IN GREECE.**

The following message was received on January 13th, from the President and Secretary General of the Christian Union of Intellectuals in Greece :

‘ We address ourselves to you, on behalf of the Christian Union of Intellectuals in Greece to express to you our whole-hearted solidarity with the indignation of the free world at the violation, by the Soviet forces of occupation in Hungary, of every fundamental human right and every sentiment of human dignity, and at the extinction of freedom in that country.’

### **UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN.**

On November 17th, 1956, we were informed by Sir Thomas Murray Taylor, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen that :

'The Senatus Academicus of this University, in its corporate capacity, desires unanimously to associate itself with the expression of sympathy and solidarity with the universities and colleges of Hungary.'

### **WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, SAINT LOUIS, U.S.A.**

The following message was received on December 18th, from Arthur H. Compton professor of Natural Philosophy at Washington University, Saint Louis :

'We at Washington University want to express our full sympathy with the Hungarian universities in their effort to restore their country's independence as the condition of peace and of sound scholarly pursuits.'

### **UNIVERSITY OF OPORTO, PORTUGAL.**

The Senate of the University of Oporto Portugal submitted the following statement, signed by the Rector and heads of departments of the university :

'We associate ourselves with the movement of solidarity and sympathy with the martyred people of Hungary and with their heroic fight for independence. We affirm our solidarity and moral support for the Hungarian universities in this tragic moment of their history. We condemn the means of violent suppression that have been used against the Hungarian people.'

### **UNIVERSITY OF OSLO.**

The following statement supporting the Hungarian universities was received from the University of Oslo, Norway, on November 28th, signed by the Rector and 131 professors and assistant professors of the university :

'We express our deep concern at the fate of our colleagues in Hungarian universities and appeal to the Russian authorities to respect the freedom and cultural heritage of Hungary.'

## **NATIONAL UNION OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.**

The following are extracts from a message which was sent by the National Union of Australian University Students to the student organisations of Hungary, and communicated to us on December 11th :

‘ We express our sympathy and support for the youth of Hungary who are now fighting for freedom of the press, for Universities unfettered by political control, for academic freedom and for the removal of foreign control of the University curriculum.

We observe with pleasure the spontaneous gesture of European students who are offering practical assistance in your struggle. May this help enable you to uphold your belief in the rightful demands made by the students of Hungary on October 21st. We in Australia, being too far away to provide such assistance, can do no more than pledge our complete moral support to you and to the principles for which many have died and which you are still fighting to uphold. We admire your courage and pray that in the outcome your just claims will triumph.’

## **UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH, SWITZERLAND.**

The following are extracts from a resolution passed on November 8th, by the Senate of the University of Zurich, Switzerland and published over the signatures of the Rector, Heads of Departments and President of the Students’ Association :

‘ We, the professors, lecturers and students of the University of Zurich, assembled in the Great Hall, express our indignation and loathing at the inhuman action of the Communist rulers of Russia against the Hungarian struggle for freedom.

We appeal to all universities of the Western world to unite in the struggle against the moral, physical and spiritual subjugation of the peoples of Europe and to search for ways and means of liberating them from their shackles.

## **UNIVERSITY OF ISTANBUL, TURKEY.**

The following message was received from the University of Istanbul, Turkey, signed by 48 members of the staff of the university :

‘ We, the undersigned members of the University of Istanbul, declare our whole-hearted moral support for the scholars, scientists and writers of Hungary and express our sincere sympathy for them in their present plight.’

### **UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO, NEW ZEALAND.**

The following message was received on December, 10th from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Otago, New Zealand :

‘ The Council, the Professorial Board and the Association of University Teachers of the University of Otago, New Zealand, express their sympathy with the Hungarian universities and support them in their desire for the restoration of that independence which is needed for scientific and scholarly pursuits and which will enable them to continue to serve mankind with their researches and to collaborate with their colleagues throughout the world.’

### **UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA.**

The following message was received on December, 30th from the University of Adelaide Staff Association :

‘ The University of Adelaide Staff Association expresses its moral support for the Hungarian universities in their efforts to maintain freedom of academic thought.’

### **FRANKFURT UNIVERSITY.**

The following are extracts from a declaration which was passed unanimously by the Senate of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany, and communicated to the Committee on Science and Freedom by the Rector of the University, on December, 21st:

‘ The Johann Wolfgang Goethe University associates itself with the free peoples of the world in expressing, as a corporate body, its protest against the ruthless extinction of freedom and self-determination by the Soviet authorities in Hungary.

We appeal to the conscience of the free world to follow the lead given to us by the heroic people of Hungary, and to resist all attempts to suppress freedom and basic human rights, wherever and whenever they may appear.’

### **FRIBOURG UNIVERSITY, SWITZERLAND.**

The following telegram, signed by the Rector and Deans of faculties of Fribourg University, Switzerland, was received on November, 12th:

‘ At a meeting held on November 9th, 1956, the University of Fribourg proclaimed its solidarity with the Hungarian Universities.’

# SCIENCE AND FREEDOM

The bulletin of the Committee on Science and Freedom, is obtainable free of charge, from the Joint Secretaries at Lime Cottage, 818, Wilmslow Road, Manchester, 20, England.

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